Producing
Transmedia Stories
- A study of producers, interactivity and prosumption

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Spring Semester 2012
Abstract

This master thesis aims to identify the production processes within the contemporary creative industries, and in particular one field of culture and media production called transmedia. This thesis focuses on one particular aspect of transmedia – interactivity and participation. The questions that are investigated are: How does transmedia producers use interactivity? Does transmedia and interactivity change the production conditions for producers, and if so, how and why? The aim of this thesis is to get an understanding of the working conditions within the context of transmedia for producers and in extension for the consumers. Through this, the intention is also to create a better understanding of the role of transmedia within the contemporary creative industries.

The methods used to examine this are based on qualitative research interviews with six transmedia producers and participatory observations of the documentary film project *Ghost Rockets*. By using a theoretical framework based on interactivity, participation, Marxist theories and Critical Theory this thesis comes to the conclusion that transmedia producers strive for interactivity but that full interactivity rarely is achieved. The use of interactivity and transmedia also leads to changing working conditions for both producers and consumers. These changes include a blurring of the roles of producers and consumers and that both producers and consumers are working for free.

Keywords: transmedia, interactivity, participation, prosumption, production, consumption, documentary film, Marx.
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1. Introduction

The technological changes that are taking place within our contemporary culture, and my interest in this, is what this thesis started out from. Some of these technological changes are the rise of the Internet, new media platforms and new types of media production. I was interested in the changes taking place within culture and media production, what these changes do to the people involved and what societal consequences this leads to.

As a result of these technological changes many new ways of producing and distributing culture have been emerging. As a result of this, more and more amateurs are able to produce culture (Jenkins 2006). Therefore, there have been discussions on how the roles of producers and consumers are changing (Jenkins 2006, Storey 2006). All of these changes can be found in one of the new ways of producing culture – called transmedia. Transmedia is what I have been particularly interested in for this study. I wanted to get an understanding of what transmedia is, how it works and what it does to the people involved. With this thesis I intend to share further light on what transmedia actually is and what transmedia might lead to for producers and consumers within the fields of culture and media.

Transmedia or transmedia storytelling is a way to tell a story using different media platforms (Jenkins 2006). There are two essential cores of transmedia. The first one is that the user of the project or product will get different understandings of the story from the different platforms. The different platforms together make up the base of the project. The second core of transmedia is interactivity (Jenkins 2006). Interactivity is perhaps the most important part of transmedia since it is what differentiates it from traditional media. Transmedia projects very often engage the consumers in the creation process, and seek out to make the consumer or audience active instead of passive (Hartley 2005, Jenkins 2006).

It can be argued that this in fact leads to that the audience or consumer also becomes a producer. This has been formulated by Alvin Toffler (1989) in the term prosumption i.e.

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1 Transmedia is to be separated from the term cross media. Cross media means that the project is using different platforms but that it does not use different stories for the different platforms, as transmedia does.
a combination of the words production and consumption, and prosumer i.e. a combination of the words producer and consumer. When the consumer becomes part of the creative process and creates content for the producers without getting paid, it can be argued that this is unpaid labour and that the consumers are being exploited (Hardt and Negri 2000, Terranova 2004, Fuchs 2010). This will be discussed in depth later on in this study. There are a couple of studies examining this but most of them focus on the consumers and fan-culture (Baym and Burnett 2009, Jurgenson and Ritzer 2010). With this study I want to examine the producers’ role in these processes. Even though there cannot be any production without any consumers (Marx 1976) it is, after all, the producers who are the driving force of transmedia production.

For this thesis I have been studying one specific transmedia film project called Ghost Rockets. I now first of all want to give a deeper understanding of the context from which this study is based on. First of all, I will discuss the creative industries, describe what transmedia is and give a fuller description of the Ghost Rockets project.

Background: The Creative Industries

The last century offered many big technological changes. Some innovations that directly changed the way culture was created and distributed was the cinema, the radio, television and later on the Internet. During the last decade there has been an explosion of new ways to create and distribute cultural products, mainly because of the Internet (Jenkins 2006). We have gone from an industrial society towards a knowledge society and further on to an information society. Today, however, the information society may no longer be enough to describe how the society we live in works (Hartley 2005). Hartley argues that creativity is what will drive the economy and society forward in this coming new century (2005, 1). One aspect of this new type of society is what he calls the creative industries. The term creative industries “combines – but then radically transforms – two older terms; the creative arts and the cultural industries” (Hartley 2005, 6, italics in original). What the creative industries actually are and include is hard to define. It is found in both the primary, secondary and tertiary industries although it might have most in common with the tertiary (Hartley 2005, 27). One part of the
The concept of the cultural industries was coined by Adorno and Horkheimer (1944 (1997)).
What Is Transmedia?

The concept of transmedia originates from Henry Jenkins’ (2006) studies of convergence culture. He refers to the term convergence as “more than simply a technological shift. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences. Convergence refers to a process, not an endpoint” (Jenkins 2006, 34). What he is saying is that new media is a merging between many different technologies and this affects how we consume media. This is also fuelling shifts within the media production field. He uses Hollywood as an example of this. A few decades ago the film was the focus of the production; today the big film corporations have interests across many different technologies, such as computer games, websites, music etc. (Jenkins 2006, 34).

The creative industries, and what Jenkins refers to as “knowledge culture” is still defined by traditional culture, what he calls “commodity culture” (Jenkins 2004, 35). However, new knowledge culture will ultimately change even the way the old commodity culture works. He writes that these changes are very clear in the culture industries and that “the commodities that circulate become resources for the production of meaning and where peer-to-peer technologies are being deployed in ways that challenge old systems of distribution and ownership” (Jenkins 2004, 35). Thus, culture alters the way technology works. However, cultural and technological shifts are part of a complex dynamic system where culture changes technology and technology in turn changes culture.

As explained by Hartley, Jenkins also sees a new type of consumer that is active, nomadic, disloyal, socially connected, defiant, loud and public. The old consumer was inactive, conventional, isolated, obedient, quiet and unnoticed (Jenkins 2006, 38). This new consumer demands more from the producer than the old consumer did, and this is where transmedia comes into the picture. To be able to satisfy the more demanding consumer capitalism has to redefine itself and meet these demands. Transmedia can therefore be seen as a tool to be able to meet these demands (Jenkins 2006). Jenkins explains that, “while each individual work must be sufficiently self-contained to satisfy the interests of a first time consumer, the interplay between many such works can create
an unprecedented degree of complexity and generate a depth of engagement that will satisfy the most committed viewer” (Jenkins 2006, 40).

Hence, it is important to separate the terms convergence culture and transmedia. Convergence culture refers to the whole cultural processes currently taking place within media. Transmedia storytelling is a part of this process and one example of what is going on within convergence culture (Jenkins 2006). Within the complex system of convergence, transmedia emerges. Transmedia becomes the solution to a cultural problem, the problem of the more demanding consumers that need more and more stimulation.

So what exactly is transmedia storytelling? The term entered the public in 1999 with the film The Blair Witch Project, although it can be argued that the concept itself is a lot older than that (Jenkins 2004, 40). Some claim that transmedia is not new at all, and that for example Star Wars used transmedia several decades ago, although the term had not been invented (Jenkins 2006). With the merchandise as an extension of the story of the Star Wars movies, kids could play and continue the story outside of the movies with action figures etc. The difference might be that today the play is situated on the Internet and in the virtual. Jenkins, however, defines transmedia as:

A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best – so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don’t need to have seen the film to enjoy the game, and vice versa (Jenkins 2006, 95-96).

Thus, transmedia storytelling is a production process that involves different media platforms where one story is expanding through the different platforms. For my thesis I have been working together with a transmedia project, and I will now discuss this project.
The Ghost Rockets Project

The Ghost Rockets project is a transmedia documentary film by the directors and producers Kerstin Übelacker and Michael Cavanaugh (Ghost Rockets 2012). The base of the project is a documentary film that revolves around a Swedish UFO organisation called UFO-Sweden and the people involved in this organisation. The documentary is character lead and focuses on a few people active within this association. The filmmakers will follow UFO-Sweden on an expedition to a lake in the north of Sweden. There they will investigate the lake with divers, metal detectors etc. to see if they can find a ghost rocket that supposedly landed in the lake in the 1980’s. The ghost rocket phenomena are one of the few UFO phenomena that UFO-Sweden has not been able to give a natural explanation to (Ghost Rockets, 2012).

UFO-Sweden also has the biggest UFO-archive in the world. As a part of the documentary the producers have been given access to this archive and to the hundreds of previously classified documents and reports concerning the ghost rockets phenomena. These documents are an important part of the Ghost Rockets project and one of the main reasons why they have chosen to work with transmedia. To organise these documents the producers want to invite the users and create some kind of interactive game or timeline where these documents form the base of the game or timeline. To use transmedia for this project is also a good way to market and distribute the film in new and different ways.

My part in the Ghost Rockets project has been twofold. I have on the one hand been doing practical work for the project by working with for example marketing and outreach. On the other hand I have been there as a researcher, examining the production processes, how the producers have tried to form an audience and the way the producers have been working with this project. I have been a part of the Ghost Rockets project for about five months during the time I have been writing this thesis. During this time I have gotten to know the producers and the project and I have also gained a lot of knowledge on transmedia and transmedia production. Working with this project has also raised a lot of questions about transmedia production. Some of these questions are what I have been investigating in this study.
The Transmedia Manifesto: Creative Interpretation

My thesis consists of both this essay and a creative interpretation. The interpretation has taken the form of a small booklet to show my results and conclusions of the essay but through a more practical angle. The creative interpretation is also a way to present the results from my practical experiences working with the Ghost Rockets project. The title of the booklet is *The Transmedia Manifesto* and the idea is that it will work as a guide for transmedia producers. It is not about telling the producers what to do or not to do. Rather, the intention is to offer a few guidelines and insights into a transmedia production process.

The booklet has been made in the form of a pdf. The reason for this is because it is the best way to make the booklet available to as many as possible. To make it available to as many transmedia producers as possible I have also created a webpage where both this thesis and the booklet will be available for download to anyone interested. The idea of this creative interpretation is to give something back to the transmedia production field and hopefully offer some new insights into the field.

Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to get an understanding of the working conditions within the context of transmedia for producers and in extension for the consumers from a Marxist perspective. As previously explained there is a merging of the concepts of producer and consumer within the contemporary creative industries. It has been argued in earlier research that transmedia and in particular interactivity changes the production processes of culture and media projects and that consumers are being exploited. However, I want to investigate these issues through the perspective of the *producers* and what their views on these problems are. Therefore, the questions I want to investigate are:

- How does transmedia producers use interactivity in relation to their audience?

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Does transmedia and interactivity change the production conditions for producers, and if so, how and why?

The intention is to get an understanding of how the different producers view and use transmedia storytelling and interactivity. The aim of this thesis is to get an understanding of the working conditions within the context of transmedia for producers and in extension for the consumers. Through this, I also hope to create a better understanding of the role of transmedia within the contemporary creative industries.

Disposition

In this first chapter I have discussed the background for this study, presented the problems I intend to examine and my aim of this thesis. I have contextualised these in the bigger perspective of creative industries and the transmedia field.

In chapter 2 I will present some previously made studies on documentary film and audience, The Web 2.0 and its consequences and consumer labour. I have used these previously made studies as a point of departure for my own study.

In chapter 3 I will present and discuss the theories I have used to analyse my empirical material. These theories consist of Critical Theory, Marxist theories, interactivity and participation.

In chapter 4 I will explain and discuss the methods I have used to gain and analyse my empirical material, which consist of qualitative research interviews and participatory observations. I will discuss the choices I have made and the problems that arose during the process of this thesis.

In chapter 5 I will present the results of my collected material and analyse it using Critical Theory, Marxist theories and theories regarding interactivity and participation in relation to earlier research.
In the final chapter 6 I will conclude my findings and put them in a bigger context. I will also give suggestions on the future research that could be made.
2. Earlier Research

As I explained in the previous chapter I have investigated how the different producers view and use transmedia storytelling and interactivity. Much of the earlier research on these issues focus on the consumers’ part of the creative industries. My focus, however, will be on the producers. To be able to put my research in a bigger context I have looked at studies made within cultural studies and studies dealing with transmedia, film, and consumer research. The different authors mentioned in this chapter have been used to get an understanding of the different aspects of new media in the creative industries.

Documentary Film and New Media

Most of the literature in the documentary film field deals with the distribution of films and the film audience. There are, to my knowledge, just a small amount of theories and reports about transmedia and film since it is still so new. Within the film field and the documentary film field the use of new media and transmedia has been accelerating. This has led to several changes in the way documentaries are produced, distributed and marketed. These changes are discussed in *Documentary and new digital platforms: an ecosystem in transition* by Nathalie Coutard, et al. (2011). They argue that the changes within the documentary film field means that the audience gets involved within the different parts of the production, from the creation of ideas to financing the movie and reaching out to new people (Coutard et al. 2011, 8). This change has taken place within many different documentaries and does not depend on the genre or the way the movies are made.

Some characteristics of a new media era for documentary film are that there is a “time-shift” within the way people watch films (Coutard, et al. 2011, 16). Today, the audience can watch films whenever they want to. They can also watch movies wherever they want to which is referred to as a “screen-shift” (Coutard, et al. 2011, 16). The audience can watch films either on television, their computer, laptop or their cell phone and it can be argued that this also is one of the reasons why transmedia has become more and more used by film makers. Coutard, et al. describes that these two different shifts, the time-shift as well as the screen-shift leads to a desire for a more multifaceted experience.
by the audience. It also makes the distance between the producer and the audience smaller (Coutard et al. 2011, 16). Therefore, this study has been useful for my thesis, which will also discuss these ideas.

The changes within the documentary film field are also due to the Internet. The Internet has made it easier for the audience to participate and be included within different projects (Coutard et al. 2011). The passive audience is long gone and the audience sometimes even wants to be part of the creation or the storytelling of a film. When this is happening, it is important for the producer to have a “strong artistic vision” in order to not let the film stray too far away from the original idea according to Michel Reilhac, head of the film department at Arte France (qtd. in Coutard et al. 2011, 18).

However, it is important to let the audience be part of the production and a good way of doing this is to use social media. Coutard et al. writes that social networks are very useful when it comes to form an audience and this has in turn led to a new way of looking at the audience. This new relationship between the producers and the audience has even led to a new term called a “community of spectators” – a term which replaces the term audience (Coutard et al. 2011, 25). Even though social media and social networks are very useful and accessible tools for producers they also necessitate a big amount of time to even make a difference for the marketing of the documentary film (Coutard et al. 2011, 28). Nevertheless, “[…] the arrival of digital formats has given independent filmmakers the means to be completely independent, in distribution as well as production terms” (Peter Broderick qtd. in Coutard et al. 2011, 44). The different new digital platforms are both a tool to engage the audience in more interactivity and a way to distribute the documentary film in different ways on different platforms (Coutard et al. 2011, 54).

Coutard et al. offers a similar understanding of the new type of consumer as Jenkins does. The emergence of the more demanding consumer is a product of capitalism and convergence culture. This has in turn led to the emergence of transmedia, which fulfils these demands and make them even more rooted in the capitalist system. From this process a recirculation of these different processes takes place and reinforces themselves even more (Hartely 2005, 24). I will in the next part discuss the issues of the Internet and the Web 2.0 in relation to this.
The Web 2.0

As I have explained, documentary film and new types of media are today tightly integrated. Another important aspect of new media and consumers is the use of the Internet. Some writers have a very optimistic view on the Internet and collaboration. In his book *Making is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, From DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0* David Gauntlett (2011) writes about the importance of making things and sharing it – particularly on the Internet. He describes the Web 2.0, in contrast to the previous “old” web, as a collective network. Instead of each person doing their own thing by themselves, they come together and share their things. Gauntlett also describes the “Web 2.0 as a metaphor, for any collective activity which is enabled by people’s passions and becomes something greater than the sum of its parts (Gauntlett 2011, 7). As an example of this, he brings up YouTube, Facebook and Wikipedia. All of these are becoming better and better the more people utilise them.

When it comes to media in general, Gauntlett is also saying that everything is becoming more and more based on the Internet. This has in turn changed the way people communicate and bond with each other (Gauntlett 2011, 12). This also changes how companies and organisations communicate with the consumers.

Taking the shift of the media with the help of the Internet one step further, leads us to look at how people deal with this shift in relation to consumption. Gauntlett writes that since people are making things by themselves instead of just consuming the things produced by big companies, this leads “to a real political shift in how we deal with the world” (Gauntlett 2011, 19, italics in original).

Gauntlett here claims that the Web 2.0 has the potential to change the whole way we look at the world and he has a very optimistic view on this shift. However, there are much more complicated and not so positive issues as well regarding the Web 2.0 and it is important to also examine these issues carefully.

The Web 2.0 can also be seen as another aspect of convergence culture. The consumers’ making and sharing that Gauntlett talks about relates to the new needs of the more demanding consumers discussed by both Jenkins and Coutard, et al. There is a concern
by many researchers that the changing role of the consumer leads to a new type of exploitation of the consumers, which is the type of studies I have looked at in the part that follows.

**The Negative Aspects of the Web 2.0**

In their article *Amateur Experts: International Fan Labour in Swedish Independent Music* Nancy K. Baym and Robert Burnett (2009) offer another understanding of how fan labour should be looked at. They argue that the question of fan labour exploitation should not be explained from a black and white point of view. The question is more complex than that. Many thinkers, as they note, have explained this new type of exploitation. The usual argument is that the fans are not exploited since they are doing it voluntarily and for fun. An important aspect of this however, is that since most of the work is fun, made by free choice, and people enjoy doing it, there is no reason for this type of labour to legitimise itself. This needs to be discussed by more researchers and just because consumers enjoy what they are doing does not mean that they are not exploited.

However, Baym and Burnett (2009) suggest that the only way of knowing if fan labour should be considered exploitation is to ask the fans themselves. According to the fans they spoke to the price they felt that they paid was above all time, paying for websites, stress and housing bands (Baym and Burnett 2009, 442). The positive aspects, on the other hand, involved forming new relationships and making contributions to the music industry. Baym and Burnett thus write that to call this exploitation is to say that the fans are not getting enough compensation for what they ought to have (Baym and Burnett 2009, 446).

This is not the case according to Baym and Burnett and therefore to say that the fans are being exploited is to refuse the fans to do what they like to do and therefore to refuse the fans of their happiness (Baym and Burnett 2009, 446). Therefore, an important thing to remember in all of this is that the users and consumers might actually enjoy doing all of this unpaid work.
In *Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The Nature of Capitalism In the Age of The Digital ‘Prosumer’* George Ritzer and Nathan Jurgenson (2010) also discuss the questions of exploitation of consumers within the new media age, using capitalism as their focal point. The difference between the “old” capitalism and prosumer capitalism is that in the prosumer capitalism labour is unpaid and products are almost free. It is also a “marked by a new abundance where scarcity once predominated (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010, 14).

Ritzer and Jurgenson argue that the prosumer should have always been the focal point and they are critical of Marx’s and Baudrillard’s separation of the two. They also suggest that the new concept of prosumption might be an indication of a whole new type of capitalism writing that “the world of prosumption, at least as it occurs on the internet, is capitalistic, but it has enough unique characteristics to allow us to begin to think of it as possibly a new form of capitalism” (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010, 22). This discussion takes departure from four different facts, which are:

- Capitalists have more difficulty controlling prosumers than producers or consumers and there is a greater likelihood of resistance on the part of prosumers; the exploitation of prosumers is less clear-cut; a distinct economic system may be emerging there where services are free and prosumers are not paid for their work; and there is abundance rather than scarcity, a focus on effectiveness rather than efficiency in prosumer capitalism (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010, 31).

Thus, this means that consumers, or prosumers, are not exploited according to Ritzer and Jurgenson, since most prosumers are enjoying what they are producing and having fun doing it.

Participation and interactivity are important ingredients in the contemporary cultural industries. Elizabeth Jane Evans (2008) in *Character, audience agency and transmedia drama* refers to how Aphra Kerr, Julian Kucklich and Pat Brereton describe the word interactivity as more of a political stance than something actually being interactive. By using the term interactivity, the focus automatically shifts towards the users and their part of the project and not the producers and their actual “control over the users” (Evans
2008, 200). These writers also “believe that interactivity is best understood as a marketing term and a truly interactive relationship between a user and a medium is impossible […]” (Evans 2008, 200). Nickianne Moody argues that interactivity is a myth but that the users nonetheless need to believe in this myth (Evans 2008, 200).

The concern of exploitation of the users within transmedia projects is something that Mark Deuze (2007) also has studied in *Convergence culture in the creative industries*. He means that since the boundaries between producer and consumer are becoming more vague, the whole way of working in the cultural industries is changing (Deuze 2007, 244). He is also critical of the way new communication technologies are being used, saying that they are supposed to be interactive and participatory but instead they are being used to strengthen a very passive and un-participatory media system (Deuze 2007, 247). He also notes that there is “[n]o reason to assume that user-generated content should necessarily be read as acts of audience resistance to the prefabricated messages of the corporate media” (Deuze 2007, 251). In other words, just because the consumer makes the content does not mean that it is critical of the producer’s message.

Deuze (2007), when writing about transmedia and the consumer suggests some aspects where further research could be done:

- Further research could focus on how professionals and amateurs collaborate, how their roles converge, and what the results of these practices are in the emerging new media ecology, on the level of economy (new and improved returns of investment), technology (development of new hardware and software enabling open media), politics and legislation (creative commons copyright laws, audience encoding rights and open source) and global culture (Deuze 2007, 259).

These issues, regarding the collaboration between professionals and amateurs, are very interesting in relation to convergence culture and transmedia. Deuze writes about how further research could be made focusing on the collaboration between producers and consumers, how the boundaries between them are being blurred and how all of this fits into the new media production landscape. He proposes possible contexts from which this can be studied such as economy, technology, politics and legislation and global culture. My essay takes its departure from 1) economy by using Marxist theory, 2)
technology by looking at transmedia and interactivity 3) global culture by putting my research in a bigger context of the creative industries and the contemporary capitalist system.

Since there is no real consensus on the issues discussed in this chapter I want to examine these issues from my own empirical material and perhaps offer a further understanding of the problems involved in these processes. All of the above mentioned researchers have focused on the consumers of convergence culture, transmedia and the Web 2.0. Therefore, I am interested in examining these issues from the producers’ point of view and offer an analysis from another perspective than that of the consumers.

To do the above mentioned I have used a Marxist perspective to analyse my empirical material. This is not a new perspective, since other researchers before have done this. However, the difference between my study and the studies of other researchers is that I have examined the producers’ roles in the project instead of the consumers’. Another difference is that my empirical material consists of my own experiences and observations of an actual transmedia project. I have also conducted interviews with different transmedia producers to get an actual understanding of how the producers’ think about these issues. In the following chapter I discuss the theories I have used to analyse my empirical material.
3. Theory

In this chapter I will discuss the different theories I have found important to be able to get an understanding of how to analyse my empirical material, in terms of how transmedia producers use interactivity and how the use of transmedia and interactivity change the production conditions for producers. In relation to the previous chapter on earlier research the aim of this chapter is to deepen the understanding of interactivity, participation, work and labour within the creative industries from the perspective of the producers and in extension the consumers.

My theoretical approach for this thesis is based on Critical Theory and The Frankfurt School, which in turn is inspired by Marx. From these disciplines I have been employing theories concerning production, consumption, prosumption, immaterial labour and interactivity. Even though the focus of this thesis is on transmedia, interactivity and participation theories concerning these issues in relation to society at large have been useful. Carpentier (2011) argues that politics and societal issues are not only applied to institutions and society at large but it is also very much part of social and daily life (Carpentier 2011, 39). Marxism and sociology has therefore been helpful in forming a context for the theories concerning interactivity and participation. The theories concerning production, consumption, prosumption and immaterial labour have also helped to form an understanding of the structures and preconditions that interactivity and participation emerge from. However, Marxism and sociology is not only about society and power structures, it is also very much about the individuals of society, which in this study are the producers.

Critical theory can according to David M. Rasmussen (1996) be explained as a theory originating from Kant, Hegel and Marx further developed by Horkheimer and other researchers at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, and later on developed by Habermas (Rasmussen 1996, 11). For me the use of Critical Theory means that I have used a Marxist theoretical framework through the Frankfurt School. By using the works of critical theorists I have looked at things such as exploitation of consumers, production and consumption and how all of these terms can be used and studied today in a changing cultural industry. Although different theorists’ works have been used the
underlying common thread is a Marxist perspective. His concepts lay the foundation upon the way we still talk about production and consumption, and it is hard to talk about these issues without using these concepts. Marx’s theories will therefore form the foundation of the theoretical discussion in this thesis and I have approached his ideas through the Frankfurt School. However, these theories will be used drawing on contemporary theorists’ ideas of these concepts put into a contemporary context with contemporary examples.

To be able to understand the processes at work within transmedia it is crucial to first of all understand how production and consumption works, both in relation to industrialisation and capitalism as well as within the culture industry. Therefore, I now want to discuss these concepts in the following part.

**Production, Consumption and Prosumption**

Firstly, I want to discuss the traditional concepts of producer and consumer. Marx has thoroughly discussed the concept of production. For Marx, however, there can be no production without commodities and commodities emerge from human needs (Marx, 1976). In *Capital* he writes that a commodity is:

> [a] thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind. The nature of these needs, whether they arise, for example, from the stomach, or the imagination, makes no difference. Nor does it matter here how the thing satisfies man’s need, whether directly as a means of subsistence, i.e. an object of consumption, or indirectly as a means of production (Marx 1976, 125).

Thus, commodities are produced because of the needs that we as humans have. It does not matter if these needs come from the urge to consume or to produce something. A commodity, however, does not any longer have to be a physical thing, but can for example be knowledge and information. As with all other commodities, transmedia is also a part of this system.
A foundational aspect of Marx’s theories on production is that of labour and exploitation. According to Marx labour leads to surplus value which, simplified, can be described as the extra value that the worker generates after he or she has produced enough to pay their own costs. The surplus value the worker produces can therefore be seen as unpaid labour. This unpaid part of the worker’s labour can be seen as exploitation, since the owner (or capitalist) makes money, i.e. capital accumulation, from the unpaid labour of the worker. This in turn leads to a division between people into different classes – the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) and the proletariat (the workers) (Marx 1976).

In today’s economy the class concept needs to be further problematised. The traditional workers and factory owners and their division into the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is not as simple anymore. Christian Fuchs (2010) has suggested some new ways of talking about class in today’s information society – what he calls informational capitalism. Some want to argue that the information society is a classless society. However, this is not completely true. There are still classes although they are no longer based on the two categories of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Fuchs 2010).

Fuchs instead argues that class should be based on exploitation (Fuchs 2010, 181). Since “the production and exploitation of surplus value are, according to Marx, the heart of class structuration and capitalism […] we today have to deal with the question of who the producers of surplus value are in an information age” (Fuchs 2010, 184). According to Fuchs the proletariat can be described as the multitude, a term coined by Hardt and Negri (2005, 103). The multitude consists of all who are not capitalists and can be defined as the class that produce services, knowledge and commodities:

[d]irectly or indirectly for capital and are deprived and expropriated of resources by capital. Such exploited resources are consumed by capital for free. In informational capitalism, knowledge has become a productive force, but knowledge is produced not only in corporations in the form of knowledge goods, but also in everyday life […] (Fuchs 2010, 186).

Hence, the exploited and the multitude become a much larger group than if they were to be defined in Marx’s original terms of wage labourers. Fuchs also argues that there is no
clear distinction between the multitude and the capitalists as there was between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This is since, for example, a manager can exploit the workers under him or her but at the same time work for a wage him or herself and therefore in extension be exploited by capitalism him or herself (Fuchs 2010, 190).

Another dimension of labour and exploitation is found in the users that produce content for big user-generated corporations like YouTube and Facebook through participatory and interactive practices. This creates yet another dimension to the class problematic since the employed workers of these companies are not the only ones exploited by them (Fuchs 2010). The users of these companies are also being exploited as unpaid workers since they generate content for these corporations. In extension to this, Fuchs argues that, “users are essential for generating profit in the new media economy. Furthermore, they produce and coproduce parts of the products, and therefore parts of the use value, exchange value, and surplus value that are objectified in these products” (Fuchs 2010, 191).

Another important aspect that Fuchs brings into discussion is that these changes and the participation of the users in the production processes do not mean that the processes are more democratic or actually participatory. On the contrary, he claims that the prosumer commodity leads to “[…] the total commodification of human creativity” (Fuchs 2010, 192).

As we can see in Fuchs usage of the word produsage and prosumer above, today the concepts of both producer and consumer are being more and more unclear as they converge and blend together. Many consumers can also be producers as the producers invite them into the production process. This is often the result of producers trying to evoke a more interactive and participatory process, not least in transmedia projects. This has led to the term prosumer – a combination of the words producer and consumer.

Alvin Toffler (1980) coined the word prosumer, and the theorisation of the concept, in his book *The Third Wave* in 1980. Toffler means that prosumption was widespread during what he calls the “first wave”, in pre-industrial societies. The “second wave” was dominated by a separation of prosumption into consumption and production, during the industrial revolution and modernity (Toffler 1980, 266). Nowadays, in the postmodern
contemporary world, this separation is being reintegrated into “the rise of the prosumer” (Toffler 1980, 265). During what Toffler calls the second wave Marx developed his ideas, which mainly are focusing on production. After the Second World War capitalism became dominated by consumption and this was also reflected in academics. Today, with the rise of the Internet and a changing world economy prosumption is once again the focus, both of capitalism and of many academics as we have seen here.

**Interactivity and Participation**

Interactivity is a concept that is important when discussing the merging of producer and consumer. Interactivity can be seen as a crucial part of the discussion on informational capitalism, prosumption and immaterial labour. Interactivity and participation in the production process is crucial to the prosumer (Jenkins 2006) and I therefore want to discuss the definition of interactivity and participation.

According to Nico Carpentier participation is first of all very much a question of power (Carpentier 2011, 10). However, he differentiates between two types of participation, which he calls micro-participation and macro-participation. Micro-participation is found in “the spheres of school, family, workplace, church and community” (Carpentier 2011, 17). Macro-participation refers to participation within a country or the community and society as a whole but participation can also be found in everyday life (Carpentier 2011, 17-18). For this thesis I have been particularly interested in micro-participation in the workplace, the online-community and within culture and media production but also how these relates to macro-participation and society.

Participation is often seen as something automatically positive. This however, is not always the case. By assuming that participation is only positive, things like “equality, empowerment, justice and peace” are left out of the discussion (Carpentier 2011, 22). Carpentier then moves on to discuss Pateman’s differentiation between two types of participatory power-practices. The first one involves two or more people in the decision-making, but most of the time only one part is the one who has the final word. This definition is called *partial* participation. The second type of participation involves every individual in the decision-making and everyone has the same amount of power. This definition is called *full* participation (Carpentier 2011, 35). When it comes to
media, audience, participation and interactivity it is always the producers of a media project that has the power to decide how much participation they want to allow and for whom (Carpentier 2011, 68, Buskqvist 2009, 163).

The field of media production “deals with participation in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media organizational decision-making (structural participation)” (Carpentier 2011, 68). Therefore, this type of participation lets people be a part of micro-participation discussed above, and they are given the chance to use “their right to communicate” (Carpentier 2011, 68).

It is important to separate the terms of participation and interactivity. According to Ulf Buskqvist (2009) participation is created and maintained by social and cultural structures while interactivity is created by media and technology (Buskqvist 2009, 169). Buskqvist is also arguing that there are at least four different ways to define interactivity. The first definition of interactivity is interactivity as a communicative process. This refers to how communication is working, either between human beings, a human and an artefact or between two different artefacts. Interactivity is in this definition connected to responsivity (Buskqvist 2009, 160). Within the discussions of the Web 2.0, explained in the chapter on earlier research, this definition is the one often being used to explain the way users can produce content of their own, share it and cooperate (Buskqvist 2009, 161).

The second definition of interactivity is interactivity as a technological feature. The interaction of this definition focuses on the communication between a human and the media technology (Buskqvist 2009, 162). It refers to how a user is allowed to control and make certain choices when it comes to a specific type of media. Buskqvist (2009) argues that it is important to separate the actual control an individual has over a media technology from the experience of control (Buskqvist 2009, 163).

The third definition of interactivity is interactivity as social interaction. This social interaction can be either between producers and consumers or between users themselves. Within this definition the interaction is not related to technology but between human beings and sociology (Buskqvist 2009, 162).
The fourth and final definition of interactivity is *interactivity as a perceived user-control* (Buskqvist 2009, 160). This definition refers to the psychological aspects of interactivity and the users perceptions and emotions of control and response within the communication process. It is how the users feel about the technological artefact regarding interactivity that matters within this definition.

However, all of these definitions blend together to a certain extent (Buskqvist 2009, 164) and they are all useful for this study although I mainly focus on the last three ones.

Carpentier (2011) also proposes many different ways to define interactivity, but the main problem is that interactivity can have so many different meanings and therefore it is hard to define (Carpentier 2011, 115). However, Carpentier (2011) discusses one useful way of defining interactivity drawing on the ideas of Szuprowicz who categorise interactivity into three different types which are 1) user-to-user, 2) user-to-document, and 3) user-to-system (Carpentier 2011, 116).

A bigger and an overall problem with interactivity is if it really exists? Both Buskqvist (2009) and Carpentier (2011) are asking themselves this question. Carpentier (2011) writes that “[m]edia professionals retain strong control over process and outcome, restricting participation to access and interaction, to the degree that one wonders whether the concept of participation is still appropriate […]” (Carpentier 2011, 69). He also argues that users much of the time also are interacting with an already finished work of art or product, where there are strict ways of how they should, and can, participate (Carpentier 2011, 56).

Mark Andrejevic (2007) also has an interesting point of view on participation and interactivity. He is arguing that it is not that interactivity is a myth or if it really exist that is the issue, but that the consumers’ interactivity is mostly just used to fulfil the needs of marketing. Further on, he argues that using interactivity and participation does not necessarily mean that the consumers are able to share any power or as he writes: “sweatshop workers certainly participate in the production process, but that doesn’t mean that the sweatshop can stand as a model for democracy (Andrejevic 2007, 28).
He also argues that what often is described as interactivity is in fact a way to manage the consumption and a way to collect data that can be used in the production process (Andrejevic 2007, 53). Thus, interactivity can then be seen as a part of the merging of consumption and production. Production and consumption are tightly integrated and complement each other. A fact that has not been ignored by Marx (1959), even if his focus lay mostly on the production process:

Consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates for the product the subject for whom they are products. The product only obtains its ‘last finish’ in consumption. A railway on which not trains run … is not used up, not consumed, is a railway only … [potentially], and not in reality (Marx 1959, 25).

Today, even if the railway is not the end product, there is a connection between Marx’s thoughts and the products of the contemporary cultural industries. Andrejevic (2007) argues that “[…] the show is no longer the final product, but rather a raw material to which value is added by the labor – some paid, some free – of recappers and forum contributors” (Andrejevic 2007, 145). There are still both products and consumers even if the boundaries are blurred and even if there is no clear end product. Interactivity for the consumers might not be so much about actually making an impact in the production process but a way to feel part of the process and be in the same position as the producer (Andrejevic 2007, 149).

Andrejevic also touches upon the marketing issues of the cultural industries in relation to interactivity and participation. He writes that “the ‘democratization’ of marketing is more than an attempt to market-test products and build interest and loyalty; it’s also a way to cut through the clutter of traditional advertising campaigns with the promise of participation” (Andrejevic 2007, 26). Therefore, transmedia is a very smart marketing strategy. He also argues that interactivity as a marketing strategy can be used as an excuse to make the marketing seem more democratic. This in turn makes it accepted to use the interactivity for consumer monitoring (Andrejevic 2007, 27).

I will in the following part discuss how interactivity and participation leads to what is called immaterial labour and affective labour.
Immaterial and Affective Labour

The concept of immaterial labour in a broad sense originates from Marx. This concept is one of the core concepts of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s (2000) discussion on the role of production in today’s global economy of which also the cultural industries, transmedia and interactivity are a part. Hardt and Negri (2000) define the concept as: “labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge or communication” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 290).

They also argue, however, that there are two different modes of immaterial labour. The first type of immaterial labour can be found in the service sector where information, communication and computers play an essential role. The second type of immaterial labour is what is called affective labour, which “involves the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labor in the bodily mode” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 293). Affective labour means that the worker gains something else other than economic compensation. This type of labour can be found within the health services but is also common in the entertainment and creative industries (Hardt and Negri 2000, 292).

Within both types of immaterial labour cooperation is an entirely natural part of the production process. Hardt and Negri explain that social communication and collaboration are integrated within immaterial labour. This means that cooperation within immaterial labour is not forced on, as in other types of labour “but rather, cooperation is completely immanent to the labouring activity itself” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 294, italics in original). This type of cooperation can be seen in many places within the creative industries. As previously discussed, the cooperation between producer and consumer through the use of interactivity can be seen as a part of this process.

Tiziana Terranova (2004) is also discussing this cooperation and how this already is a part of capitalism. She has a similar view on this as Hardt and Negri writing that this process is already merged with capitalism. She also discusses how the incorporation of collective labour into capitalism works. Instead of talking about an absorption by capital of the collective works, culture and cultural processes are emerging within capitalism.
Capitalism is therefore not absorbing culture created outside of capitalism. It is instead a built-in process of culture emerging within the structure and “monetary flows” of capitalism (Terranova 2004, 80).

Terranova is also discussing the concept of affective labour by using the term free labour. Free labour can be explained as “the moment where […] knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into excess productive activities that are pleasurably embraced and at the same time often shamelessly exploited” (Terranova 2004, 78). Thus, free labour is often not seen as labour by the workers since it is fun and pleasurable doing and different big companies in turn exploit this. However, free labour is “an important, yet unacknowledged, source of value in advanced capitalist societies” (Terranova 2004, 73). Although the concept is mostly discussed in the context of information and the Internet it is not just something confined to the Internet. Instead free labour can be seen as a big part of the whole cultural economy. It is also important to realize that free labour, is not just a part of the Internet and some kind of realm outside of reality. The Internet is very much a part of reality and rooted in our postindustrial society (Terranova 2004, 75).

The blurring between consumer and producer, Terranova claims, does not necessarily lead back to what Marx would describe as an alienated worker since not all Internet users are producers. Instead “[…] the process whereby production and consumption are reconfigured within the category of free labour signals the unfolding of another logic of value, whose operations need careful analysis” (Terranova 2004, 75). There are also other problems regarding this that needs to be discussed. First of all, working for affection even if it is for the capital can still be regarded as real work for the person doing the work and this should not be omitted. Also, all labour is not waged labour and free labour does not have to be exploited labour (Terranova 2004, 91).

Terranova also discusses the consumers’, or users’, part in these processes. Talking about the consumer implies that there is a commodity to be consumed. However, today the product, it could be argued, is not perhaps the commodity itself but rather the process leading up to the finished product and this is a common process in the whole media landscape today (Terranova 2004, 90). Since consumers are a part of this process the consumers become reflected in the product. Because of that, a product can only be
"as good as the labour that goes into it" (Terranova 2004, 90). This is also one of the fundamental cores of transmedia and interactivity.

As discussed above in relation to Marx, a commodity is created from human needs (Marx 1976). These needs of consumers and users to do not just appear, or as Trebor Scholz (2008) writes, “the desires of users did not grow in a vacuum; they are largely created by the market machine in the first place” (2008). According to Marx commodities within capitalism are defined by their exchange-value. The exchange value refers to their price (mostly measured by how much money they cost) as opposed to the use-value, which refers to what the commodity really is good for and what it does (Marx 1976). A consequence of the use of exchange-value is the idea of commodity fetishism. By giving commodities value that does not really exist the commodity is emptied of its real value and filled with new constructed value. This in turns leads to that the commodity becomes mystified as a fetish, in a religious sense. According to Marx this fetish “attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities” (Marx 1976, 165). Hence, the commodity is given its own life and is released from the labour of the workers.

Contemporary Culture and Media Production

To be able to understand the context within which all of the issues of the creative industries are taking place it is important to get an understanding of the contemporary political and economic world as a whole. Returning to Hardt and Negri (2000), they describe the contemporary global capitalism with the term “Empire”. Empire can, simplified, be explained as an evolution of the imperial and modernist ways of capitalism towards a new postmodern political and economic order. The biggest shifts taking place within Empire is the blurring of the “the binaries that defined modern conflict” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 189). One of the biggest changes is taking place within the production and the labour processes. We have moved from industry towards services and even one step further towards an information society. This change towards an informational society has lead to changes regarding labour as well (Hardt and Negri 2000, 289).
This shift has therefore also lead to a change for the people involved within the production processes. For the people involved in this new economic shift new ways of working are becoming more and more important. The new jobs “are highly mobile and involve flexible skills. More important, they are characterized in general by the central role played by knowledge, information, affect, and communication” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 285). These then, are the new characteristics of labour within Empire. Computers have also played a significant role in the changing production processes and “the heterogeneity of concrete labor has tended to be reduced, and the worker is increasingly further removed from the object of his or her labor” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 292).

This can in turn be connected to Marx’s theories of alienation (Marx 1959). Alienation from Marx’s point of view refers to the worker being alienated from the product he or she is making. In industrial society the machines made the workers feel alienated since they could not express their creativity in the same way as the single craftsman (Marx 1959). With the use of computers and technology this alienation can be said to have taken an even further step. Marx, however, did not believe that technology and machines would take over the manual industrial labour. Although, when talking about the Internet and the immaterial labour of today there is no manual industrial labour, Marx’s ideas are still useable. Marx writes that, “the most developed machinery thus forces the worker to work longer than the savage does, or than he himself did with the simplest, crudest tools” (Marx 1993, 708-709). This is perhaps even truer today, where it can be argued that both the producers and consumers work more or less all hours of the day.

This is comparable to Angela McRobbie’s (2002) theories regarding the working conditions in the creative industries. She discusses what happens when affective labour becomes the central type of labour within the creative industries. She argues that in the creative industries the job market functions the same way as a club; networking and networks are crucial to be able to get a job. She also argues that the working conditions in the creative industries are very tough and that ”small scale previously independent micro-economies of culture and the arts find themselves the subject of intense commercial interest” (McRobbie 2002, 517). This in turn has, according to McRobbie, led to an individualisation of work. The individualisation of work has also led to less clear structures in the labour policies. ”It [the cultural sphere] also offers the
Government opportunities for a post-industrialized economy unfettered by the constraints and costs of traditional employment” (McRobbie 2000, 518).

McRobbie is also arguing that “work has been re-invented to satisfy the needs and demands of a generation who, ‘disembedded’ from traditional attachments to family, kinship, community or region, now find that work must become a fulfilling mark of self” (McRobbie 2002, 521). When comparing this to the alienation of workers, the worker is no longer alienated in Marx’s sense, since workers are doing what they want to do and their free time is part of their work time. This can also be connected to affective labour. As McRobbie writes ”the expectation that work is satisfying and inherently rewarding has a special significance alongside the need now to be one’s own breadwinner” (McRobbie 2002, 521). However, that the worker is not alienated in Marx’s sense or because people enjoy their job does not mean that capitalism has become gentler. Instead the workers seem to be exploiting themselves in capitalism’s place and therefore it is harder to blame capitalism for the negative occurrences. McRobbie calls this self-exploitation and she writes that “self blame, where social structures are increasingly illegible or opaque, serves the interests of the new capitalism well, ensuring the absence of social critique” (McRobbie 2002, 521).

These new, uncertain working conditions have in turn changed the whole way the production process operates. Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that:

life is no longer produced in the cycles of reproduction that are subordinated to the working day; on the contrary, life is what infuses and dominates all production. In fact, the value of labor and production is determined deep in the viscera of life (Hardt and Negri 2000, 365).

Thus, life and labour are nowadays deeply intertwined. However, Hardt and Negri do not suggest that there is much to be done about these issues of Empire. Instead, they argue that we should not go back to old capitalism or what was before that “[r]ather, we must push through Empire to come out the other side. Deleuze and Guattari argued that rather than resist capital’s globalization, we have to accelerate the process” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 206). They compare this to Marx’s ideas that capitalism is better than the previous forms of production and they argue that rather than going back to what was
before, new better changes will probably emerge from the contemporary condition (Hardt and Negri 2000, 43).

In this chapter I have looked at different theorists’ views and concepts of the contemporary creative industries. Complex systems of prosumption, immaterial labour and interactivity come into play in contemporary capitalism. According to the theories discussed here these processes lead to a merging of consumers and producers, exploitation of users as well as producers and a tougher working climate. I will now explain the method used to answer my questions through my empirical material.
4. Method

In this chapter I explain the process used to gain my empirical material, how the material was processed, how the material was analysed and how my choices have affected the conduction of this study. My methodological perspective will also be presented as well as the limitations and problems that emerged along the process. Since much of the earlier research made on the issues around transmedia is quite theoretical I have been interested to see how the processes discussed in previous chapters are manifested in the everyday practices of a transmedia project as well as for the producers working in this field.

Material

The research methods that I have used to get an answer to my problems about the changing production process for producers within the documentary film field are based on qualitative research. My material consists of six qualitative research interviews conducted with different transmedia producers, participatory observations conducted during my time with the Ghost Rockets project and different documents from the Ghost Rockets project like for example their project plan. Two of my qualitative interviews were made with the two producers and directors of the Ghost Rockets project. The other four interviews were conducted with other transmedia producers that were not part of the Ghost Rockets project. Therefore, I have two different entry points towards understanding the processes of transmedia production – a transmedia project and interviews with transmedia producers.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) interviews are often used as an “auxiliary method” and in participatory observations interviews are often used as a complement for the observations (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 117, italics in original). This mixed method approach is what I have been employing in this study. I have used participatory observations during the time I have been doing fieldwork with the Ghost Rockets project. This practical knowledge has then been compared and strengthened with interviews with the producers and directors of the Ghost Rockets project as well as other transmedia producers.
The producers I have been interviewing are firstly Kerstin Übelacker and Michael Cavanaugh, the producers and directors of the Ghost Rockets project. Since they are a part of the same project it was necessary to talk with other producers outside of the Ghost Rockets project to get a bigger picture of the transmedia production practices. Therefore, I have also interviewed Hanna Sköld who works as a director and producer at the production company Tangram. She has previously made a transmedia film called *Nasty Old People* and is currently working on her other transmedia project called *Granny’s Dancing on The Table*. The fourth person I have interviewed is film producer and owner of the production company Auto Images, Lennart Ström who is currently working on a transmedia documentary film project. The fifth person I have interviewed is Lina Linde who is working with an art project that uses transmedia as its base. The final person I have interviewed is Cecilie Stranger-Thorsen who works as a transmedia consultant for her own company Stranger. All of these transmedia producers are based in the south of Sweden.

**The Ghost Rockets: Participatory Observations**

For this essay I have, as explained, been a part of the transmedia documentary film project Ghost Rockets for five months. For this project I have been doing practical fieldwork, which has offered me special insight into the working process of a transmedia project. The practical work I have been doing during my time at the Ghost Rockets involves trying to identify the audience for the film and market the project in different ways through Facebook, blogs and other webpages. I have also discussed the project with the producers and given them input in creative decisions, with for example what music to pick and what material to use for the movie. During this time I have therefore gained insight into how the processes of creating a film works and how marketing and trying to reach an audience works in a transmedia project. During the fieldwork I have also gotten to know the producers of the project, how they work and what their view on transmedia is. These types of insights are hard to gain from only interviewing the producers. Working with a project during a longer period generates different kinds of insights than to only speak with a person for about an hour. Therefore the practical work has been useful for my material.
The method for documenting my time with the Ghost Rockets project has been conducted with participatory observations. This gave me the advantage of being able to study the production process from the “inside”. As a part of this participatory observation I have been taking field notes, pictures and documented the process of the Ghost Rockets’ Facebook page. Every time I have been working together with the Ghost Rockets’ team I have been taking field notes on issues and occurrences that I have found interesting and valuable for this study. These have later on been rewritten and organised in a single document to get a better overview of the notes.

Some of the observations can better be described as experiences from the project. These experiences have not always been written down but are parts of my whole working process during the time this essay has been conducted. These experiences founded the base of how I later on chose to develop the interviews. Since I already at that stage had some experience from working with transmedia I knew what to ask and how to ask it. I had also received knowledge of transmedia and how to talk about transmedia. These experiences can also be explained as what Virginia Nightingale (2008) calls exchange. In Research Methods for Cultural Studies she explains that while doing observations the “‘exchange’ between the researcher and the research subjects is the medium that assists the transformation of ideas and thoughts into the words and activities recorded” (Nightingale 2008, 105-106). This type of exchange has manifested itself in informal everyday conversations with the producers of the Ghost Rockets project while I have been working with them. These conversations have been more relaxed than the interviews. The conversations have been taking place in the Ghost Rockets’ office space. Therefore, they have offered another type of knowledge on transmedia from the perspective of the producers’ everyday work.

During my participatory observations I have not been interested in just specific moments or occurrences but also in the working process as a whole; how the producers talk about their project, how the producers talk about themselves as producers and/or directors, and how the producers talk about their audience and their users.
Qualitative Research Interviews

Since the aim of this thesis is to identify the processes leading to the merging between producer and consumer within the context of transmedia as well as to be able to understand the working conditions within the context of transmedia it was crucial to get the producers’ own points of views on these topics.

Therefore, qualitative research interviews was chosen as a method, since “the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale and Brinkman 2009, 1). I wanted to look at the producers’ own view on their role as producers. What does it mean to be a producer and how does the different producers define the concepts of producer, consumer and transmedia? Can the producers observe a changing definition of the concepts of producers and consumers and if so, why? I also wanted to look at how they view the audience and consumers and their connection to this.

I used what Tobias Olsson (2008) describes as semi-structured interviews and what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe as “semi-structured life world interview, in part inspired by phenomenology” (Kvale and Brinkman 2009, 14). The reason why I chose this type of interview was to be able to go in depth with that the producers had to say. I have tried to treat the interviews like conversations between two people interested in the same subject as opposed to being too formal and asking strict questions. I have also attempted to make the interview more like a flowing conversation even if I have planned the interview and some of the questions in advance. However, I have let the interviewees speak as freely as possible around different selected themes and topics and then I have asked supplementary questions which in turn sometimes led to other themes and topics. Therefore none of the interviews look exactly the same.

Procedure and Sample

The interviews were conducted with six different producers from different transmedia projects. Four of the producers were working with film (Ghost Rockets, Granny’s
Dancing on the Table and Mitt Hjärta’s Malmö), the fifth was working with an art project (MC Dirty Snow) and the last one was working as a transmedia consultant. This means that more than half of the interviewees were working with film and the other two were working with transmedia in other ways. Even though my focus has been on film, and in particular documentary film, the diversity of the different projects offered a balanced perspective on the whole variety of transmedia. However, it is important to remember that these six producers do not represent the whole global transmedia industry. Rather, the producers interviewed represent a small part of the south of Sweden. The sample of producers for this thesis was chosen because of the accessibility. Within the local context that this study was conducted, there are not that many transmedia producers and even in a global context there are not too many transmedia producers at all yet. The attempt has therefore not been to make a generalisation of the whole transmedia industry. Rather, I have made what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe as an analytical generalisation. This “involve a reasoned judgement about the extent to which the findings of one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation. It is based on an analysis of the similarities and differences of the two situations” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 262).

Six interviews may not be considered enough material. But for this study the focus has been on qualitative methods. As Kvale and Brinkmann explain many studies benefit from having less interviews which instead are prepared and analysed more carefully (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 113). Therefore six interviews have been enough since I have been able to get much information and interesting aspects out of the interviews. Kvale and Brinkmann also argue that one should simply have as many interviews “as necessary to find out what you need to know” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 113).

The interviews were mainly done face to face. When this was not possible because of geographical distance two of the interviews were conducted via Skype. The video-interviews conducted via Skype worked fine since I could still see the interviewees’ faces and expressions. A problem with Skype was that one of the interviews got interrupted because the connection was lost. Nevertheless, the interview could later be continued and I still got what I wanted from the interview.
One interview was done via e-mail. However, the interview made via e-mail cannot be considered a qualitative research interview. This interview was not at all as deep as the other interviews. It was abrupt and the data was much less rich. Therefore, it has not been used more than as a support for the other interviews. All of the interviews (except the one made via e-mail) were recorded with an audio recorder. They all agreed to be interviewed, recorded and cited in this study.

All of the interviews have been transcribed. Not every single “hm”, sound or pause have been transcribed since I have focused on what the interviewees have said rather than exactly how they have said it. Five of the six interviews were conducted in Swedish and one was conducted in English. I have not translated the whole transcriptions made in Swedish. Instead I have chosen to only translate the relevant parts that have been used in this thesis. The parts used in this thesis have also been edited a bit to make them more easy to read, like removing too many “like”, pauses etc. In the next part I discuss other choices, limitations and problems that occurred during the research for this thesis.

Limitations and Methodological Problems

One major question some may pose with regards to my research questions is why I have not done any research or interviews with the consumers of a transmedia project. The reason why I have not done any interviews with the consumers and the users is mainly because the focal point of this paper is on the producers’ perception of the users. Therefore, to see how the producers talk about and view the users, and how they develop the transmedia tools for the users, is the important aspect of the consumer interactivity discussed in this thesis.

Another issue of the methods presented here is that the observations are based on only one transmedia project. It can be argued that ideally one should study at least two different projects to be able to make any assumptions about transmedia projects in general. However, this is not my point since I will use the project and the producers of the project as an example of what a transmedia project can be. I do not intend of doing any general assumptions whatsoever and all of my material will also be analysed in relation to previously made research that is drawn from other transmedia projects. I have, partly because of this problem, therefore interviewed producers from other
transmedia projects to get a broader perspective of the transmedia working processes. However, all of my observations are made solely from the Ghost Rockets project. A limitation of doing participatory observations is that it is possible to get too involved within the project. Nightingale (2008) argues that there is a fine balance between being too involved and being too distanced. If the researcher is too distant and too much of an “outsider” it is easy to miss out important issues. If the researcher is too involved and too much of an “insider” it is easy to forget what the research intentionally wanted to examine. Since I have been participating in the Ghost Rockets project during a longer period of time I, to a certain extent, became an insider of the project and therefore it was sometimes hard to separate my work from their work. Although I had a fairly clear idea about what I wanted to observe during my participatory observations of the Ghost Rockets project I constantly had to take a step back to remind myself of why I was there.

A problem of doing observations emerges when you do not have a clear idea about what it is that you want to observe (Olsson 2008, 71). This has been a limitation for my study. When I started working with the Ghost Rockets project I had still no clear idea about what I would examine. Therefore, the observations are quite general and this made it hard to use them for my analysis. However, they have not been completely useless. The observations have been used as a background and context for the interviews and they also gave me knowledge and examples of how a transmedia project works. Much of the observations focus on the practical work and therefore I have used the observations for my creative interpretation that focuses on the practical issues of transmedia.

Problems have also emerged concerning my material as a whole. When I started this study I collected a lot of material from the Ghost Rockets’ Facebook page and from the users’ interactions with the project. I later on realised that I could not answer my research questions with this material and that I had to talk to more transmedia producers than those from the Ghost Rockets project. Therefore, the qualitative research interviews were done quite late in the research process. For that reason, it was hard to get access to people to interview. However, once I did get in touch with transmedia producers to interview they were all very interested and helpful. Therefore, my research could still be completed.
Ethical Dilemmas of the Research Process

Different ethical problems have emerged during the research process of this thesis. Firstly, I had to make a choice if I should include the interviewees’ names in my study or not. When I talked to the different producers interviewed it was clear that all of them wanted their names to be mentioned, and they did not want to be anonymous. Therefore, I had to consider the consequences of writing their names in this study. I came to the conclusion that since none of them mentioned anything too private or confidential there would be no severe consequences. Also, the interviewees have been interviewed as professionals within the transmedia field and even if they sometimes talk about how their work affects their personal life, it is the interviewees as professionals I have been interested in. Furthermore, as Kvale and Brinkman (2009) mention, to anonymise the interviewees might also lead to making the interviewees’ voices unheard. To anonymise the interviewees can also serve as an excuse for the researcher to interpret the results to benefit the study, without making it possible to argue for the accuracy of the interview statements. As one of my interviewees mentioned it can be seen as good courtesy to write the names of the participants that have actually made this study possible (Kvale and Brinkman 2009, 73). This leads to the second issue regarding my role as a researcher.

The knowledge and information that this thesis has been studying does not just float around waiting to be studied. Knowledge is instead “produced socially in the interaction of interviewer and interviewee” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 82). Therefore, I as a researcher as well as the participants are always affecting and producing the studied material. When it comes to the observations, the researcher is also very much affecting the material being studied (Nightingale 2008). The people being studied are perhaps acting differently when the researcher is there observing etc. Since I have been a part of the Ghost Rockets’ project this problematic have been twofold. First of all, I had to be conscious about what impact I made on the material. Secondly, I could not be too critical of the Ghost Rockets project since they invited me into their world and lives and allowed me to be a part of their project. Because of this, and because most of the producers perhaps are not used to critically examine what they do, I have not been able to be as critical as I might have wanted to be. Nevertheless, I have of course been critical to a certain extent and still been studying what I attempted to study. This thesis
has therefore been a balancing act between being nice to the people inviting me into their project and at the same time critically studying their project.

**Analytical Point of Departure**

The analysis of my material started after each interview had been conducted during the process of transcribing the material. This offered a good opportunity to process the collected data and to get an overview over the material.

The way I have chosen to analyse my material is based on what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe as a critical theoretical analysis. They describe this as resting “on a general reading of the interview texts with theoretically informed interpretations. Knowledge of the subject matter of analysis here carries more weight than the applications of specific analytical techniques” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 233). For me, this means that I have analysed my material from the theories described in the previous chapter. In turn, this means that I have only looked at the material from my chosen theories. This can be seen as a limitation since the results would probably be different if other theories had been used instead. However, the theories that I have chosen to use relate to my research questions and therefore I have also been able to answer my research questions.

The interpretations I have made would probably be interpreted differently if they were to be looked at from a different perspective. By using a critical theoretical analysis I still want to argue that my findings are accurate and appropriate. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain this as:

> a critical reading demystifies via a hermeneutics of suspicion: it seeks deeper truth underlying the hegemonic discourse of the texts. The reader assumes the role of the emancipator of self and/or other, seeking a truth beyond ideologies and false consciousness. The reader calls attention to larger social, political, and economical issues […] (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 236, italics in original).
This is what I have intended to do with the subject of transmedia. Dangers and limitations of this type of analysis might be that the researcher attempts to “speak for others” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 236). Hence, I want to stress that this has not been my intention and I have tried to avoid this as much as possible. I have therefore tried to let each interviewed person be heard, and I have explained what their thoughts and views on the different subjects are. I have then explained what this means in a bigger context and in relation to my own reflections of the results, in relation to my chosen theories.

A theoretical analysis of the collected material might also lead to a biased reading where only the aspects of the chosen theory are noticed. Since I am aware of this I have during the working process carefully reflected on my own preconceived notions and presuppositions of the themes and topics discussed in this essay. I have also during the whole process of this essay tried to be open to different interpretations and angles and tried not to press on the theories to fit my results and vice versa like a too small a suit. This can be explained as an abductive research method where the empirical material is guiding the course of the research (Schrøder 2003, 47.). An abductive approach also means that the research is dynamic and constantly changes. For me, this means that I for example have changed my research questions during the work process of this essay as I have learnt more about the subject. Another example is how the material changed, as previously explained. Another example is how this entire chapter on my methods have been rewritten, since I at first wanted to do Action Research. As I got more knowledge on my subject and as the research questions changed, I realised that the Action Research method was not what I was doing and that it did not work for this type of study.

I have, by using an abductive approach, gotten a deeper understanding of all of the preconceptions I had of the transmedia industry when I started this study. An example of these preconceived notions is how the focus of this thesis has shifted during the time I have been working on it, from the exploitation of consumers to the existing working conditions of the producers. During the research made for this paper I have realised that the phenomena of transmedia and all of the related processes could not be explained simply as the fact that producers are exploiting the consumers. Instead, these processes should be carefully analysed, which is what I have tried to do in the following chapter.
In this chapter I have discussed the methods I have been employing for this study, the choices I have made and what consequences these choices have led to. The Ghost Rockets fieldwork and observations has given me concrete examples of how the producers talk about their consumers and how the production process of a transmedia project works. The qualitative interviews have been used to put the observations and examples in a bigger context. I will now present my results of the empirical material presented here and analyse it in relation to the theory presented in the previous chapter.
5. Results and Analysis

In this chapter I will present and explain the results from the interviews and the participatory observations as well as analyse this in relation to my theories and earlier research. I have chosen to combine my results and the analysis into one chapter. The reason for doing this is to be able to instantly analyse what the results mean and to avoid repeating myself regarding the results and the analysis. A limitation of combining the results and the analysis into one chapter is that it can become unclear what is a result and what is an analysis. It is also possible that one of these parts disappear into the whole. However, I mean that it is better to combine these two parts, as it is easier to get an overview of what I have found and what these findings mean.

I will analyse the results from five different themes in relation to my research questions, which are: *How does transmedia producers use interactivity? Does transmedia and interactivity change the production conditions for producers, and if so, how and why?* The themes that will be discussed are 1). the producers’ view of the audience and users, 2). interactivity, 3). prosumption, 4). transmedia producers and finally 5). the bigger picture of these aspects of interactivity and transmedia. The themes that I have chosen to discuss in this chapter are based on the topics and discussions that have arisen during my interviews as well as during the observations⁵. I will in this first part look at and analyse how the producers view their users and their audience.

**Audience and Users from the Perspective of the Producers**

How the transmedia producers view their audience and consumers have been a central issue in this thesis. The producers that I have interviewed have different ways of viewing their audience. The audience, or users as most of the producers would like to call them, are very important for any transmedia project since they are what makes a project interactive. Kerstin Übelacker, producer and director of the Ghost Rockets project, says that the audience means a lot to her and explains how a fan created a video about their project and uploaded it to YouTube: “You want to know who your fans are

⁵ The producers have for example not used the word “prosumption”, but I have used this word to categorise their thoughts into the context of this study.
and you want them to like you. […] This interaction would have been fun. We were super happy when this guy in the USA posted this video about Ghost Rockets […]”.

The way the producers talk about their audience and what terms they use varies. For Cecilie Stranger-Thorsen the biggest difference between traditional media and transmedia is the perception of the users. Most of the producers use the terms users or participants except two, the other director and producer of the Ghost Rockets project, Michael Cavanaugh and producer Lennart Ström. Cavanaugh wants to use the term audience since he believes it is easier for people to understand. Ström also uses the more traditional term audience. Lina Linde, producer of the transmedia art project, on the other hand talks about different layers of the audience and users:

One often talks about different layers of the audience. There are the ones who are very involved. Participants you can call them too, I think I have mostly called them users and participants. You usually divide them into different percentages of three parts, where the great mass basically is just a traditional audience; they look at what others create and what is offered to them. Then there is another part that is a bit more active, and then there is the smallest percentage of the ones that goes all in, that are involved in the creating.

Übelacker is also discussing these layers and she claims that there is a difference between users and leechers. She means that the leechers are the traditional audience that just sits back and watch the film while the users are the few percent that are engaged and create their own content in relation to the product. This can be seen as an example of how the producers prioritise their audience differently.

It is therefore possible to say that it is not the audience that turns a culture or media project into transmedia, but rather the active users. It is the active users that make up the interactivity of a transmedia project. Hence, the producers want as many users as possible in order for the project to be a successful transmedia project. In relation to Buskqvist’s (2009) third definition of interactivity as social interaction the producers want interactivity both between producers and consumers as well as interactivity between the users.
A traditional audience is looked down upon a bit since the producers really want the active users that contribute to their project. However, Lennart Ström who is the oldest and most experienced producer I have interviewed is sceptical about the audience being too active. He explains how he and his company usually invite people in to watch and comment films before they finish them to hear what the audience thinks about the film. This process is used even if it is not a transmedia film. He says that they invite “people who are not part of the film business, but people that we feel are pretty wise but who don’t have a need to say smart things, because we don’t want that. People that will say smart things they can leave”. This is an example of how many producers want active users when it gives them something in return. If the audience is active but in the wrong way, then there is no desire from the producers to use interactivity. This is an example of both Carpentier’s (2011) and Buskqvist’s (2009) statements that it is the producers who have the ultimate control over the interactivity and participation and that therefore real participation and interactivity does not really exist. In this case, this is very much true. I will in the following part discuss the issues of interactivity more thoroughly.

**Interactivity**

When it comes to whether it should be called transmedia or not if there is no interactivity is a thing that the people I have interviewed have different opinions about. Hanna Sköld, producer and director of the movie Granny’s Dancing on the Table, means that the core of transmedia is the interactivity. Übelacker also talks about the interactivity of transmedia, and although she is not certain about whether transmedia can exist without interactivity or not she says that “if one should put it in some kind of hierarchy then it is of course cool to have an interactive project, that’s what everybody wants”.

Connecting this to the discussion on interactivity in the theory chapter there seems to be a contradiction. These transmedia producers clearly all want to use interactivity in their projects even if some find it hard to really incorporate it into the project. While researchers such as Carpentier (2011), Buskqvist (2009), Andrejevic (2007) and Evans (2008) argue that there can be no real interactivity and that interactivity is a myth, some of the producers I have talked to really believe that there can be. Interactivity, however,
does not automatically mean that the consumers or users have more power all of a sudden, just like Andrejevic (2007) is arguing. This is how Sköld describes it:

I’m thinking that the goal is to be as interactive as possible, but at the same time it is still me who writes the script in the end and I’m the one deciding what should be there and what should not, because someone has to. It becomes hard if you have a democratic process, perhaps you could have that, but in this project I don’t want to do that.

Once again we can see how the concept of control comes into play. Producers have the control over how much participation and interactivity they want and this becomes problematic. This is also relevant in relation to Pateman’s (in Carpentier 2011) concept of partial participation where it is the producer who has the final word. If the users are excluded from certain parts of a project but invited into other parts of a project, is it really participatory and interactive? According to the scholars mentioned above it is not. However, it is important to note the difference between for example Hanna Sköld’s project and an old film production where the users had no say at all. The problem, that is not relevant for an old traditional film project, is when a transmedia project promise interactivity and participation but really offers no real interactivity at all.

However, in contrast to Hanna Sköld, Michael Cavanaugh has an almost opposite view on interactivity. He argues that interactivity often is bad for the creative quality of a project saying: “Have you ever played that game where someone starts a story and the second person has to continue the story, around the campfire? Well you know, those stories they’re fun because it’s participatory. I mean if you write that story down the story sucks”. Here we have instead a producer that does not believe interactivity is as good as everybody seem to think

This is how the both two producers of the Ghost Rockets project resonate, as I have seen during my observations. Within the project there have been discussions back and forth if the users should be involved, how the users should be involved and if so why. For the Ghost Rockets’ producers the interactivity leads to many problems. For them, interactivity is something that they will create in extension to their product. They are producing a documentary film and then they will use their UFO-documents as another
part of the project to get the audience involved. Therefore, in the example of the Ghost Rockets, interactivity is used as a marketing method in Andrejevic’s sense (2007) and something that you just do because you are supposed to do it. For the Ghost Rockets interactivity is certainly used as a marketing strategy and as Andrejevic (2007) argue the Ghost Rockets’ film is not the end product – but rather the transmedia project as a whole.

However, as Cavanaugh says not all projects benefit from being interactive and letting the users participate. There has to be a reason for interactivity. If there is no reason for a project to use interactivity, should the producers just let the audience be passive as in a traditional film project? If no real interactivity can ever be established should the producer then just go back to being the one completely in charge or should the producer at least try to let the users be involved if that is what the users want?

Linde believes that interactivity still is important and a crucial part of transmedia. She argues that the audience is tired of being passive. Today there is no strict role of the spectator where “you should sit down when you should sit down, give applauds when you should give applauds and get up when you should get up”. For Linde’s project the interactivity works completely different. Her project is an art project where the whole idea is to make people discuss issues around a certain project. For her, interactivity is not something that you put on top of the finished project, her project is the interactivity. Therefore, it is hard to say how interactivity really works within transmedia. It completely depends on the project and the context. Linde views interactivity as something good and she says that her project would not work at all if there were no participants since “there would be no content if nobody puts up any content”. This is a statement that can be connected to how interactivity in extension leads to free and affective labour, by using the users as producers of content. I will return to this later on in this chapter.

Sköld argue for using interactivity and the power of interactivity. She claims that a film for example can be much more than a film if people are involved and a part of the project. She says that, “there is a longing for many to be involved, be a part, to change and do it in your own way”. Sköld also thinks that interactivity is lasting but that transmedia might not. She says that “what I believe will still exist is the interaction
because I believe people are tired of being passive […] spectators of something and they want to interact. If it will take the form of transmedia or if it will take the form of something else, we don’t know”. This shows how interactivity is something that most of the producers strive to achieve. For the Ghost Rockets project interactivity is something that they know should be there, but they do not know how or why they should achieve it.

Many of the interviewees addressed the matter of democracy and how they are making people involved in the production process, a question also discussed by Carpentier (2011). Andrejevic (2007) argues that interactivity is often in reality used as a marketing strategy by disguising interactivity as a democratic way of producing a project. However, none of the producers I interviewed talked about these issues as a marketing strategy – which it actually is. By offering participation to the consumers the product in question stands out. This is also true to the transmedia producers I have talked to. That none of them brought this up might be to the fact that they did not think about it because they are so intertwined in their own projects so that they do not see it. It might also be to the fact that they truly believe that interactivity is a good thing.

The issue of interactivity is not a real expression of democracy but I do believe that the producers genuinely believe that it is. I want to argue that it is part of a much bigger process than what the producers’ do or think. It is part of the whole way capitalism works today and because everybody is doing it then of course the small transmedia producers also have to do it to be part of the system.

Interactivity in a transmedia project might be a way to try a more democratic production process, as Carpentier (2011) talks about in relation to participation. Nevertheless, it is important to not overlook the other aspects of this interactivity. Even though not all producers might be aware of it, interactivity is a great opportunity to get help and creative input for free. The producers do not have to pay this help with money; instead the users are paid with fun, experience and an opportunity to express themselves. Therefore the concept of interactivity can be connected to the concept of immaterial and affective labour. This is very clear for The Ghost Rockets project, as I have studied in their marketing plan and project plan.
The use of interactivity is a crucial part of the Ghost Rocket project’s marketing plan. When studying the documents of the project this is quite clear. In an application to the Swedish Film Institute the producers of the Ghost Rockets project write that their aim is “to let the audience not only see and understand our characters but also interact and take part in their world”. Thus, by using interactivity they want the audience to be able to be a part of the universe they are creating. But how they are attempting to this and why is not something that is quite clear. In their project plan they state that they want to expand the universe (of their film) “with interaction, gaming and online content”. The reason why they want to do this is mainly to reach a big international audience. Interactivity in this case is thus used as a pure marketing strategy, just as Andrejevic (2007) argues.

Further on in the project plan the producers of the Ghost Rockets project write about their web platform. They write that the web page will work as something that ties all the different parts together. However, the web site is (at this stage) very static and non-participatory and no interactivity whatsoever exist in any of the definitions of interactivity that Buskqvists (2009) talks about. The only thing at this stage of the production process that is somewhat interactive is the Ghost Rockets’ Facebook page. The question is, as both Carpentier (2011) and Buskqvists (2009) also are asking, if clicking on a page and writing a few comments can bee considered interactive and participatory? In terms of power, also discussed by both Carpentier (2011) and Buskqvist (2009), the Facebook page is neither interactive nor participatory. The users can comment on whatever they like and even offer suggestions that the producers might use, but the power to actually decide whether to use these suggestions or not is entirely up to the producers. The participation that is taking place on the Ghost Rockets Facebook page can therefore be argued to be partial participation in Carpentier’s and Pateman’s definition, since the users are making their voices heard but the real power lies in the hands of the Ghost Rockets producers.

In the Ghost Rockets’ project plan they also write about the community that they want to build around the documentary and how this community will make the documentary possible. What they want to do with the help of the community is to be “able to pose questions to the community engaging them in the process by asking them for advice, discuss documents, images and cases”. Further on they write about how they want to use crowd funding to get money for the Ghost Rockets project. Both of these two
examples are examples of how a transmedia project uses interactivity and participation for their own needs. By using what they call “the community” to help them with their project the Ghost Rockets are using both interactivity as a power-tool (Carpentier 2011), free labour (Terranova 2004, Hardt and Negri 2000) and getting money for their project. The project gains three advantages from these production processes but for the consumers this raises a lot of issues concerning power, control as well as exploitation.

I have previously discussed how interactivity can also serve as a marketing purpose and this is very clear in the Ghost Rockets project plan. Under the headline “Marketing/Distribution” they write that “the audience will be invited to participate and interact in many different ways”. They then move on to write about what this interactivity means and keywords that can be drawn from their description of this are to “watch”, “participate in forums”, “comment”, and “translate”. Hence, from this it is possible to see how they define interactivity. To watch, write in forums, comment and translate is what the Ghost Rockets consider interactive. In relation to Buskqvist’s (2009) and Carpentier’s (2011) discussions the Ghost Rockets producers’ definition of interactive is quite static. An even clearer issue of both this and the use of interactivity and free labour (Terranova 2004, Hardt and Negri 2000) as a marketing strategy is stated in the sentence: “By interacting with us, talking about us and buying our products the audience will help us with our marketing, but also work as our co-financiers”. Needless to say is that this is a very harsh view of the consumers from the producers point of view. However, the producers do not seem to be aware of the actual issues being stated here. If they knew more about the issues surrounding interactivity, participation and free labour they would perhaps not rethink their whole marketing strategy, but they would probably express themselves more carefully.

Interactivity therefore should be seen as an extension as well as a process to immaterial and affective labour. As Terranova (2004) argues, this opportunity for the producers to get free help with the creative content is manifesting itself in the “excess productive activities” (Terranova 2004, 78).

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6 Compare with the discussion on “community of spectators” by Coutard et al. (2011)
All of the interactive parts of the Ghost Rockets transmedia project that are not part of the film can be seen as these excess productive activities e.g. interactive games, interactive archive documents etc. These excess productive activities are exactly what both the Ghost Rockets and the other transmedia projects are inviting the users into through the interactivity. Interactivity can therefore be seen as a crucial part of getting access to free and affective labour. The question is if interactivity creates affective labour or if affective labour creates interactivity. I want to argue that they go hand in hand. Interactivity makes it easy to get access to free and affective labour. However, affective labour also facilitates interactivity as more and more users are getting used to these processes.

However, it can also be argued that these interactive excess productive activities are unnecessary for the projects from the producers’ point of view. They often lead to additional work for the producers and it is questionable if the work they get in return from the users actually makes it worth it. During my time with the Ghost Rockets project this has manifested itself in much work for the producers and discussions between Übelacker and Cavanaugh if they should have any of these excess productive activities at all. Sometimes, as I have seen during my observations of the Ghost Rockets, these excess productive activities only seem to function as a kind of segregated attachment to the projects and it seems like they are made for no other reason than because it is a transmedia project and because they are expected to be there. The only real reason why these excess productive activities should exist is because they offer a good marketing opportunity. On the other hand, if they are not completely integrated into the projects in a good way it is just bad marketing and then it would be better to not have them at all.

Interactivity, we have seen here, is a trend that to a certain extent turns the consumer into a producer. I will in the next part discuss how this leads to a blurring between production and consumption – into prosumption, and how the producers think regarding this.
Prosumption

Another focus of this thesis has been on the less and less distinct boundaries between production and consumption, and the blurring of the producer and the consumer as a result of the use of interactivity. Stranger-Thorsen admits that this is happening and for her this is what transmedia is about. She also says that if producers are to hold on to the traditional role of the producer they will become irrelevant. Stranger-Thorsen says that today’s media producers are competing with both other producers, amateur-producers as well as every platform out there that offers engaging game play and storytelling to their users. When commenting on the blurring between producer and consumer, Hanna Sköld argues that this blurring is a good thing. She says that:

This is the best thing that can happen. The world we have now, with producer and consumer, is a world that is based on maximized economic surplus. In fact, today we are also all producers and all consumers. It’s just that you don’t think about yourself in that way. There is an idea in the world today that is based on [...] if we talk about stories now, for example, those who tell the stories and those who listen. But in fact, those who are telling the stories have once listened to be able to get their stories.

Essentially, what she is talking about here is how production and consumption go hand in hand and that there should be no distinction or separation between the two. This idea can be linked to Toffler’s (1980) and Fuchs (2010) ideas about prosumption. The fact that she is reflecting on this can be seen as a way forward towards new types of prosumption and a new way of doing business within transmedia and the field of culture and media production.

Cavanaugh has also given this some thoughts and he sees himself as both a producer and a consumer saying that: “I would consider myself to be a consumer and a producer of media. I feel like I’m one of them, you know. I’m part of the consuming swarm of the Internet, but I just happen to be someone who is also putting some stuff up”. The fact that he, as a producer, also identifies himself as a consumer is very interesting. Since most of the earlier research and theories on prosumption discuss how the consumers are becoming producers – and not the other way around – it is interesting to
see here how a producer also reflects on his role as a consumer. However, producers have of course always also been consumers even before the Internet and transmedia.

On the other hand, when it comes to a specific story or film Cavanaugh believes that “storytellers that are professional storytellers tell the best stories”. Hence, the production processes in the creative industries are becoming more and more dominated by prosumption. An issue that this changing production process give rise to is, among others, an issue of the quality of the end product.

When interviewing the different producers, most of them seem to be fine with the changing roles for them as directors and producers. During my observations of the Ghost Rockets project the producers there have never discussed these issues either. Therefore it seems as if these issues are not that important to them in their daily professional lives. However, most of the people I have been talking to are avoiding discussing the negative aspects of these changes while at the same time mentioning how these changes creates more time-consuming processes and other challenges. It can therefore be argued that they are aware of these issues but that they are trying to tell themselves that they are not that important.

The concept of prosumption (Toffler 1980) can also be connected to the concept of immaterial labour (Hardt and Negri 2000, Terranova 2004) since immaterial labour is completely dependent on cooperation. Therefore, the concept prosumption, it can be argued, is a natural aspect of immaterial labour. The use of cooperation between producer and consumer within transmedia projects is not at all something strange. This process is not something that the transmedia producers have invented. Rather, it can be seen as a natural development of the global economy and the production processes involved in immaterial labour. I will in the following part discuss and analyse how the transmedia producers look at these changes and what it means for their work.

**Transmedia Producers**

Transmedia and the use of interactivity certainly affects the production and working conditions for the producers within the culture and media field. All of the interviewed producers said that working with transmedia took a lot of time and energy, but that there
were both negative and positive aspects of working with transmedia. Cavanaugh sees both the good and the bad things saying that: “It’s twice the workload. It’s about two hundred times the amount of possibilities; it’s not twice the possibilities, it’s like two thousand times the possibilities of what you can do”. He is also reflecting on these possibilities and how they sometimes also make it harder to make decisions for the project: “it’s like trying to chose your breakfast cereal if you got like an entire shopping isle dedicated to breakfast cereal”.

Ström, however, does not like to talk about the down sides of transmedia for him as a producer. However, he has also reflected on the issue of time concerning transmedia. For him it is hard to make a time schedule that works and he says that the biggest problem with transmedia is that you as a producer have less control over the project. For him this is not a very big issue, since as he says, he is not a brain surgeon.

Übelacker clearly see what transmedia does to the working conditions for her. She talks about how she has been working for free for many years to be able to get the connections and experience that she has today. However, she finds that she still in some way is working for free.

During my observations and experiences of the Ghost Rockets project I have clearly seen that the issue of time as well as working for free is a returning discussion amongst the producers. When making a decision it is not only concerning the movie but also the whole transmedia project. Therefore the decision-making takes a lot of time and there is a lot of going back and forth before actually making a decision.

The negative aspects distinguished here is an example of what Terranova (2004) talks about regarding free labour. Although she is discussing this in consideration to the consumers it is also applicable to the producers themselves working with these projects. It is also a clear example of what McRobbie (2002) calls self-exploitation where the producer is exploiting herself. This is almost a necessity for small producers when working in the contemporary capitalist society where an increasing individualisation is occurring. In order to be independent and make it the producer has to work all hours of the day.
I want to argue then, that it is not only the consumers that are being exploited through the use of interactivity and transmedia. In the capitalist system of today the big production companies set the norms and the demands. Smaller production companies such as the Ghost Rockets have to follow these norms to be able to even exist. That way, it can be argued that the capitalist system is exploiting the small companies as well as the consumers. Hence, the small production companies need to be part of the capitalist system to be able to survive, and therefore they in extension need to use the consumers as free labour.

Small transmedia producers can from this perspective be seen as a resistance against Empire (Hardt and Negri 2000) and against the big production and distribution companies. Transmedia can in this context be seen as have being created as a reaction against these big companies. However, since they have been created within the capitalist system they have to use the rules of capitalism, even if the producers are not aware of it. This leads to questions such as if this makes it all right for them to exploit the consumers? Is there a solution and another way for the producers to use the consumers? There might not yet be an answer to these questions, but it is important that they are being asked.

There is nonetheless still a need for these small production companies to exist so that the market will not be completely dominated by the big corporations. The small independent transmedia producers offer a balance to the bigger companies. Cultural policy is therefore important to help these small producers. On the other hand, perhaps regulations of this would prevent the “natural” development of capitalism and therefore slow down the change of capitalism into an alternative better economic system, as Hardt and Negri (2000) argue. As has been discussed, both these authors as well as Marx suggest that capitalism will lead to its own fall. Therefore, to try to regulate it and the process involved will prevent it to develop into something other and, hopefully, better.

Other than working for free, there are also other problems for small production companies, such as very insecure working conditions. During my participatory observations of the Ghost Rockets project I have noticed that there is a bigger chance that small and unexpected problems will stop or slow down the entire production process. For example, when a family member of one of the producers got sick, they
could not work on the project for three weeks. For a bigger production company this would not be such a big problem since they would have more employees and stand-ins. However, since the independent small companies usually consist of only a few persons these problems become big problems for them. As McRobbie (2002) writes, the lack of social structures for independent producers often makes these issues go unnoticed and they are seldom discussed in work policies etc. This leads to self-blame and as she writes this “serves the interests of the new capitalism well, ensuring the absence of social critique” (McRobbie 2002, 521).

Both Übelacker and Cavanaugh address the tough conditions for them as independent transmedia producers. Cavanaugh says that: “It [transmedia] takes twice as much time, nobody knows if it’s going to work, nobody knows if it’s worth it, and even if one project is successful doesn’t mean that transmedia is successful”. Übelacker is worried about her role as a transmedia producer in the future saying that: “I don’t know where the money will come from to produce transmedia. I see it as a very expensive product. I don’t know who in the future will want to pay me for sitting and keeping track on Facebook”.

Since these producers are their own bosses they do not have anyone else to blame but themselves if they will not make it, just as McRobbie (2002) writes. Therefore it is crucial for them to constantly work hard and follow the norms and demands of the culture and media industries as well as capitalism as a whole. I will in the next part discuss and analyse how these demands on the producers are working within a bigger system of the creative industries.

**Transmedia and Society**

In this part I discuss transmedia production in the context of the creative industries and the contemporary capitalist system. Übelacker reflects on her own role as a producer in the creative industries and argues that as a transmedia producer it is actually possible to change the way culture and media production works and in extension give something back to the users.
She argues that entrepreneurs and business people are starting to realise that it is possible to make products without using a normal type of production process. They are also realising that it is possible to make a change and still be economically successful. Übelacker offers a very interesting perspective on the production process. However, that these changing production processes have resulted in the end of capitalism might be to take it too far. Nevertheless, I do think they are part of the decline of the type of capitalism we are used to today. I also think it might lead to a new type of capitalism. Übelacker also thinks that transmedia and interactivity is part of these changes:

I believe that transmedia is a part of this, and I believe it frightens many because it is new and strange. All sales agents and distributors in the documentary film business that have made their living in a certain way of course don’t want people to make their own campaigns for example.

Hanna Sköld also seems to have been thinking about making a change through her project. She says that the story processes of the world are like “a cycle and everybody owns the immaterial world and we are all making the stories it is just that they occur in different places and everybody can help each other and produce the stories that a society need during a certain time”. By using Creative Commons and not claiming complete copyright of her productions she is actually concretely changing the way people think about production and capitalism.

This can also be seen as a characteristic of the new capitalism that Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010), as well as Hardt and Negri (2000, 2005) are talking about. Both producers, in this case, and consumers are able to do more by themselves by the use of interactivity and participation. This changes the whole production landscape within the cultural industries. The fact that everybody can do everything by himself or herself also leads to the decline of the opposite binaries between producer and consumer, which is another characteristic of the new capitalism. These issues discussed here can be seen as a circle where all of these issues are deeply intertwined in a very complex way.

With the cooperation (Hardt and Negri 2000) and participation (Carpentier 2011) processes within production in the creative industries, a new type of community might emerge. This can be seen as a critique of the capitalist system but it might also be seen
as a part of the existing capitalist system and something that the capitalist system will appropriate for its own profit. The risk of capitalism taking over also these new emerging production processes is quite probable. However, as Terranova (2004) discusses it is rather the fact that these processes are emerging within capitalism and therefore they are immediately being absorbed by capitalism. The “market machine” that Scholz (2008) discusses creates the needs that the more demanding consumer of contemporary capitalism requires. Interactivity and transmedia and is a part of this market machine, which reinforces this type of consumerism, which in turn reinforces the transmedia production processes. As Marx says, there can be no production without commodities, and these are in turn created by human needs.

This essay has discussed how the different producers view and use transmedia storytelling and interactivity. This has been done by looking at interactivity, participation and transmedia and the producers’ use of these processes. If interactivity and transmedia is a part of a shift within the creative industries what will happen to transmedia and the transmedia producers in the future? As discussed above, Hanna Sköld believes that the interactivity will stay but that transmedia in itself might not since that is not the core for her. Kerstin Übelacker, on the other hand does not “think that transmedia is a trend. I think we are just going to see more and more. I think that what we are doing now is what you have to do in almost every film project in five years”. Lennart Ström also believe that transmedia is a part of the future, although he is uncertain of how things will actually work.

As we have seen there are both positive and negative aspects of interactivity and transmedia and no one can know for sure what will happen in the future. Since it is still quite new many of the people I have interviewed are very optimistic about the potentials of transmedia and the use of interactivity and participation. One fear, however, is that these new production processes might be absorbed by capitalism and just be part of an already existing system. Some facts that speak both for and against this idea are the use of free and affective labour. On the one hand free and affective labour go against the traditional notions of capitalism on the other hand these types of labour seem to exploit people in a completely new way where the people are not even economically compensated for their time.
I will in the following final chapter discuss all of these findings and my analysis in a bigger context as well as present some suggestions on what future research could be made on these issues.
6. Conclusions

Transmedia producers are using interactivity in many different ways. The producers I have interviewed as well as the Ghost Rockets projects want to let the users participate in their projects. However, many of the producers are not aware of the consequences of this. Their intention is to let the audience interact and participate in the production processes but most of the time this interactivity and participation is not really interactive or participatory. Instead it can be seen as a partial participation where the producers are the ones who have the real power. It is the producers that decide which parts of their projects that will be participatory and interactive and when and how to use interactivity. Therefore the power and control of the production process still lies in the hands of the producers, just like the traditional ways of culture and media production.

With the use of interactivity and free labour from the users the conditions for both producers and consumers are changing and the roles of producers and consumers are changing. Consumers are becoming producers and producers are also consumers, therefore both producers and consumers are becoming prosumers. These changes are caused by the use of interactivity and the issue of prosumption is in turn fuelling interactivity. There is no doubt that these changes are taking place as both earlier studies as well as this thesis have shown.

This study has also shown that most of the time both producers and consumers are working for free through immaterial and affective labour as a result of more interactive and participatory production processes. This does no longer fit into the standard concepts and perceptions of the capitalist system. The question then is if this is a positive or a negative thing. One negative aspect that should be noted is that this means that the workers (producers and users/consumers) are not getting paid and therefore they are exploited. On the other hand, people still seem to be able to live on what they do nevertheless. If they are able to live a decent life anyway then perhaps this can be seen as a shift in the way capitalism works. Perhaps this new way of producing and consuming, at least when it comes to cultural products, can be seen as a new alternative to Empire and traditional capitalism. Perhaps it is not a complete paradigm shift yet but it could, and should, be considered a shift in the foundational structures of capitalism.
The Ghost Rockets project’s aim is not to intentionally exploit their audience and consumers. First of all they are a small independent production company and would not be able to make such a big project if it was not for transmedia and interactivity. Transmedia and interactivity is therefore good in some aspects, like for example the Ghost Rockets producers and other small independent producers. The producers on many occasions can be seen as the ones drawing the development forward, towards a new type of capitalism. However, this does not necessarily mean that it is not possible to exploit people just because the producer is a small independent company.

Future research should continue to examine the processes of interactivity and participation at work within transmedia production. Since much research has been conducted on the consumers’ part of interactivity and in transmedia, it would be interesting to see some more studies regarding the producers within this field. It would also be interesting to see if anyone can come up with a solution to the interactivity problem. New ways of employing full participation and real interactivity in transmedia projects would also be an interesting research subject. Finally, this study has been conducted within a small geographical area and a bigger and more thorough study needs to be done to make any general assumptions on transmedia regarding the issues I have been examining.
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**Creative Interpretation**

www.transmediamanifesto.com
The Transmedia Manifesto
- A Short Guide For Transmedia Producers
Acknowledgments

This guide is written by Cecilia Roos as a part of a master thesis in Culture and Media Production

I want to thank Kersin Übelacker and Michael Cavanaugh for letting me take part of your exciting transmedia documentary project The Ghost Rockets.

Malmö University
May 2012
The Transmedia Manifesto

The Transmedia Manifesto is intended to be a guide for transmedia producers, directors, creators, as well as for the users making transmedia possible.

The Transmedia Manifesto is a guide for you in the messy jungle of transmedia which is very hard to navigate. This guide is not intended to tell you what is wrong and what is right or what path to take. There is no wrong or right when it comes to transmedia, and perhaps that’s what makes it so exciting. Instead this guide aims to offer some of the different paths that you can take.

The Transmedia Manifesto is written for people interested to get to know transmedia, what it is and how to use it. This does not mean, however, that an experienced transmedia producer should not read it. Hopefully this guide will offer some new insights for both amateurs and professionals.
Transmedia?

Transmedia is based on two ideas:

1). Different platforms
2). Interactivity

Exactly how these two ideas work is up to you. Different transmedia producers seem to have different ideas about how transmedia works.
Multiple Platforms

Generally, what makes transmedia special is the use of different media platforms for different parts of the story. The optimal transmedia project use the best platform for each part of the story.

The different parts of the story and the different platforms should form the whole story and the whole project*. How this is achieved depends on the story and what type of transmedia project you’re working with.

*If the same story is used on all of the different platforms you have created a cross media project.
Interactivity

The second, and perhaps most important, part of a transmedia project is the use of interactivity and to get your users interested and involved in your project. This is where it gets tricky ...

How should you achieve interactivity, and why? To ask yourself why is perhaps the most important thing you can do. If interactivity is just something you dress your project with after it is finished, there is a great risk that your project will be static and uninteresting for the users.
This guide will not be able to answer this question. What it can do is offer some of the reasons why interactivity is good in general.

If you are able to make an interactive project it is likely that you will get a bigger audience. The users of today are different from the audience a couple of years ago. The users are tired of being passive and fed with messages.

Many users instead want to be active and a part of the story. This does not mean that you have to give up the whole creative process to the users. You should, however, let your users in and offer them some part in the creative process.
Giving Something Back

Many users will gladly help you for free. It is therefore a good idea to give something back to these users. Get something for free - give something for free.

This can be done by for example using Creative Commons, giving your active users previews of your material or perhaps by releasing a part of your project for free download.
Doesn’t that turn users into producers?

Yes it does, but only to a certain extent. The users become a part of the creative process but it is you as a producer that still guide the creative process and decide what should be included or not.

To have users help you should be considered something good. You get creative input, inspiration, motivation and all of it for free!
Marketing

By using different platforms and interactivity for your story you will automatically market your project to a certain extent.

An active user might upload their own content about your story on YouTube, make a post about it on Facebook or write about it in her or his blog.

The different media platforms available today also offer many new and cheap ways of marketing for your project.
Marketing Examples

A few marketing examples include:

**Facebook**: Without a Facebook-page your project doesn’t exist. Facebook offers immediate interactivity, your users can give you comments and you can reach them fast and easy. You can upload extra content and get instant feedback.

**Facebook ads**: The Facebook ads system, if done the right way, can give you lots of new users each day. The example below is an example of how many new users a transmedia documentary project got after using Facebook ads for about two weeks:
Transmedia For Change

Transmedia changes the way culture and media production is made. Other than offering new ways to share and market your story, transmedia also changes many processes within the culture and media industries.

Much of the work within the transmedia field is made for free, by users and often also by the producers. This creates new ways of doing culture and media and in extension this changes how these projects are distributed and consumed.

Transmedia projects can in extension therefore be seen as a part of a new type of economy, where more products are free and other types of payment are used instead of money.
Shared Stories

The users that are a part of the creative process of a transmedia project is also a part of the story. The transmedia users that are a part of each transmedia story should also own that story.

The person who are telling a story have onced listened to be able to get that story. Therefore, it’s important to see that we all own the stories together.
The Future of Transmedia

Transmedia is a part of the future and the new ways of producing media and cultural products. Transmedia is not a trend but a new aspect of a new economy.

In the future more and more producers and companies will have to learn to be more flexible and work the way transmedia producers work.

If transmedia will be called transmedia in the future, or if it will be called something else, is another question.

Let the stories begin!